



ASSEMBLY

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artist talk and site-specific performance at Brick Lane Mosque

24th October 2018

On October 24th 2018 the general public experienced *Assembly*, a site-specific project made and exhibited at Brick Lane Mosque. This provided an opportunity for Muslims and non-Muslims to experience Jamaat prayer via the site-performance. An artist talk at Close-up cinema introduced the event, followed by a short walk to Brick Lane Mosque where the Jamme Masjid invited the general public into both sites of worship.

Made in collaboration with Brick Lane Jamme Masjid community, Jamaat (2018) (translated from Arabic meaning assembly) is made and exhibited respecting the religious and cultural rules of the mosque. Jamaat comprises of two simultaneous installations, one in the main prayer hall and one in the female prayer room. Jamaat has found a way to connect and engage the prayer spaces, allowing access for men and women to both sites. Each installation functions as a self-making apparatus, in turn, making a broader argument about the triumph of lived space over representational space.

“It’s very unique project and I’m happy to be a part of it, it’s a new way for people, for non-Muslims to come and see how Muslims come and pray and congregate together and how the recitation gets read. It is a visual and audio experience and opportunity to learn and understand Islam, through dialogue, discussion and social interaction. I’m sure people will get a moving experience out of it. “(Imam Kamal Hussain, Brick Lane Mosque)

Photographic documentation by Jonathan Clifford.

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“If Jamaat were to be shown in a gallery, it would take on an entirely different meaning, one we wouldn’t be comfortable with. However, the bird’s eye view used to create the footage – fittingly called the “god-shot” in the film industry - shows us ourselves in a unique and unfamiliar way that’s worth experiencing. The participation and observation in Jamaat exist in tandem and remind me of one the names of Allah: Ar Raqib – the most vigilant witness, watching the world over which She has sovereignty. Site-integrity attempts to avoid fixed representation and with Jamaat, it succeeds. Not only is the footage specific to Brick Lane Mosque but also the individuals who enter the prayer space jump from the surface of the projection, particularly in the women’s prayer space where there are significantly fewer participants. We witness the fluidity of the congregation and can appreciate the uniqueness of the people who make up the group.”
(Naima Khan, Inclusive Mosque Initiative)



“This community is not a fixed object, but is continually in the process of being made and re-produced by such rituals as prayer. Jamaat, as an artwork, extends this same insight to the site in which these prayers take place. The Jamme Masjid, it is suggested, cannot be represented, because it is the acts of worship that take place in the site that make it a place. For this reason Jamaat should not be regarded as a representation of a space, and still less one of individual worshippers, but rather as an attempt to re-produce the mosque as it actually exists. Both the building and the community it forms part of are re-assembled each time the piece is displayed, each made and re-made in a relational process between audience, film, the worshippers, and building.” (Matt Webber Social Anthropologist at University College London & SOAS)





“I think it shed a new light on prayer, I found it quite interesting especially the panning of the camera. It was really aligned with the ruku (step of prayer in Islam where someone bows down) with the Imam and the prayer, so I found the whole thing quite interesting it did make me see praying in a different way, something that’s never been done before. I’ve seen it on TV how muslims pray in the mosque but it’s always from the side, never the birds eye view of people praying when going to sujūd (having the forehead, nose, both hands, knees and all toes touching the ground together), when going to ruku or sitting in tashahhud from that angle, so I liked very much.” (Congregation feedback)



“It was a very special and moving experience, especially the way the congregation interacted with us, it was very beautiful how they welcomed us into their space.” (Audience feedback)

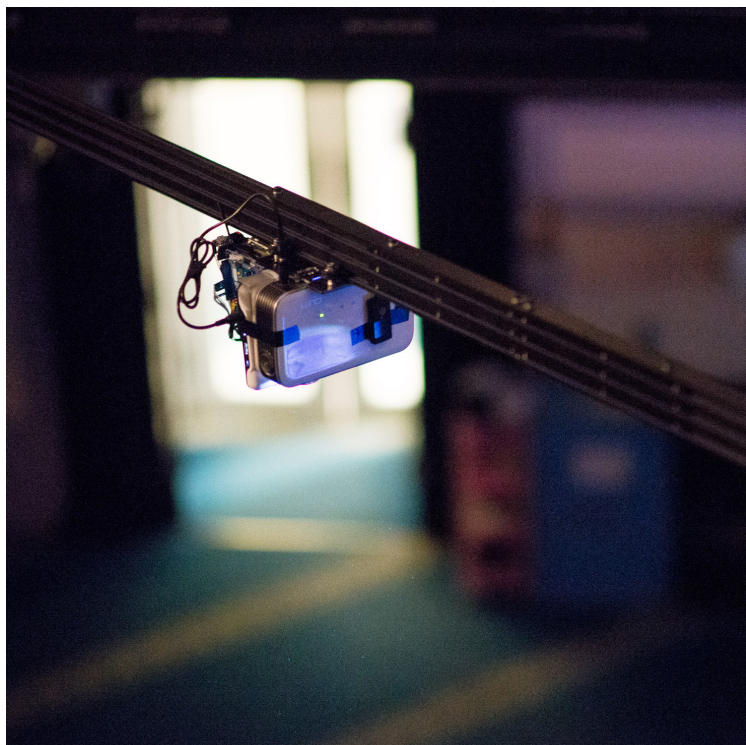


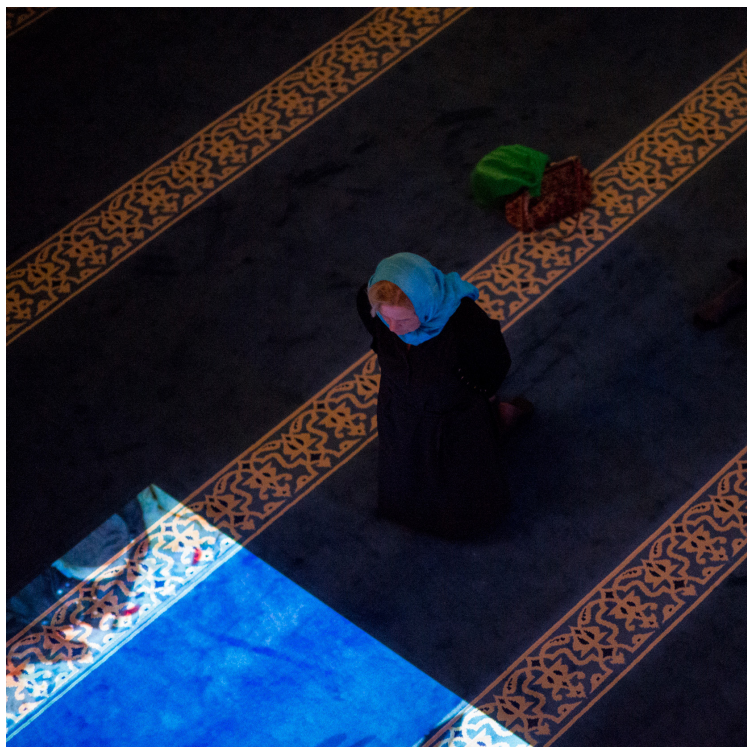


“I was always curious to see and know what was taking place, but it was obviously a strict no-go area. Having the opportunity to witness prayer through Jammāt (2018), and not feel as though I was intruding was really incredible. I found it a rare, meditative and moving experience. “ (Audience feedback)

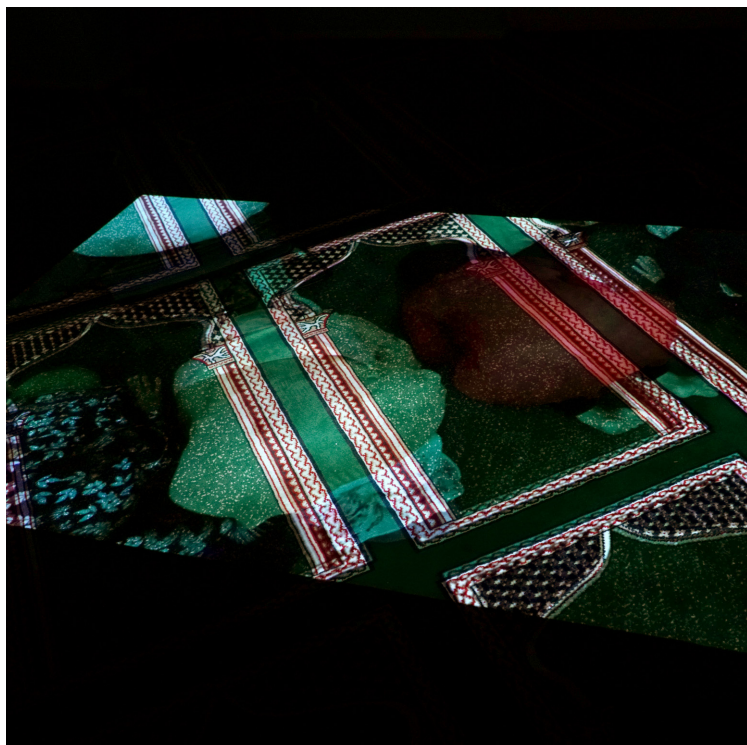


“It’s something that I’ve been observing over the last week or two, there was no intrusion you don’t know they are there, I’ve been involved since they started, the final piece is very nice, it looks like the people are standing there, it looks very real.” (Congregation feedback)

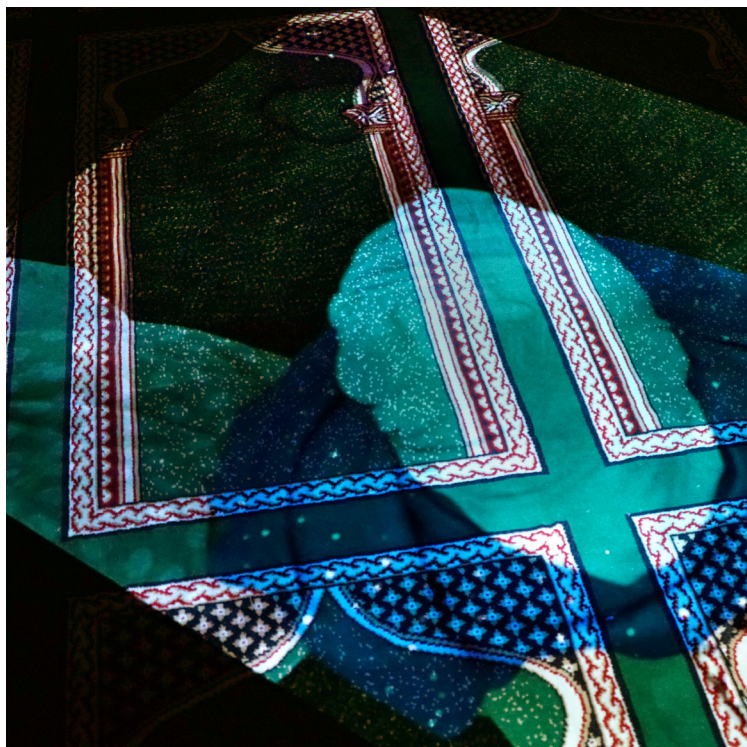


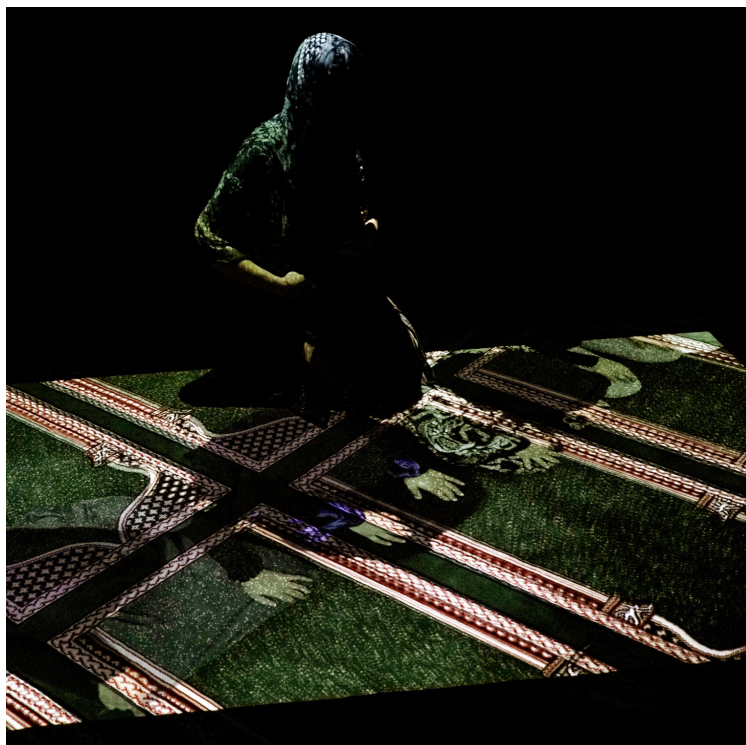






“There was something very interesting happening with the projection in the woman’s prayer room, where not only did the image seem ghostly and ephemeral but also deep. It almost seemed as though the image was being projected into the carpet rather than onto it. Maybe it had something to do with the light or the low ceiling which enhanced a downward looking, the effect summoned thoughts about the vertical space / vertical energy / vertical light / vertical bowing (up and down) action during prayer and how these synced or became extended in the projected image. “ (Audience feedback)





“Experiencing the image of my own body over me and feeling it physically move over me was a strange feeling, I was made more aware of the space around me.” (Congregation feedback)



“The projected image makes the subject matter appear even more tangible and real than reality itself. By recording a facsimile of the space and then – via a projection – placing the viewer within that space to consider it – to inspect it – more closely. There is a heightened sense of the theatrical within this.” (Audience feedback)

ASSEMBLY:

Christ Church Primary School & Brick Lane Madrasah

27th March 2019

Due to the success and interest from *Assembly*, it was agreed that the work would be performed a second time for local school children, teachers and parents to experience. The aim of this event was to help present Islam to the wider community by collaborating with the worshippers of the Mosque and the local community to create respect and understanding.

On the 27th March 2019 Brick Lane Madrasah pupils welcomed over 40 children from Christ Church Primary school, along side parents and staff. Questionnaires were given to the children to complete that also asked for a drawn response from the event.

“We had over 40 children, staff and parents attend the film installation. They were all really positive about the experience and thought it was a really interesting piece of artwork and all engaged with it really well. They have come back to school and talked about it, and we just want to say a big thanks you for allowing everyone to have the opportunity to experience it. It certainly worked in the context, being displayed in the Mosque, that was really special.” (Julian Morant Headteacher, Christ Church Primary School)

Photographic documentation by David Monteith-Hodge.





Assembly: site-specific artwork at Brick Lane Mosque

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|
| Boy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Girl | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Age <u>9</u> | | | |

1. Have you ever visited a mosque before?

Yes ☒

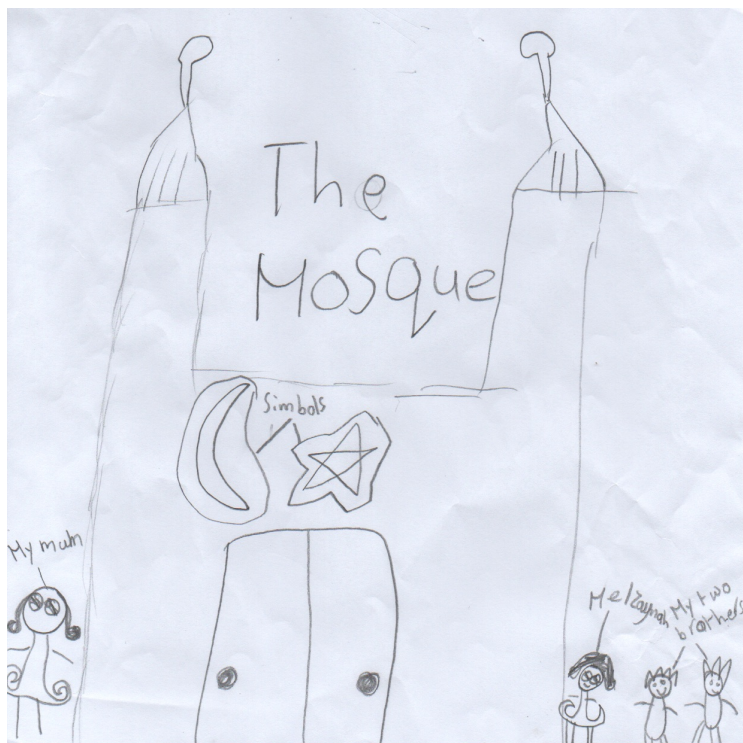
No ☒

2. Can you describe the artwork in five words?

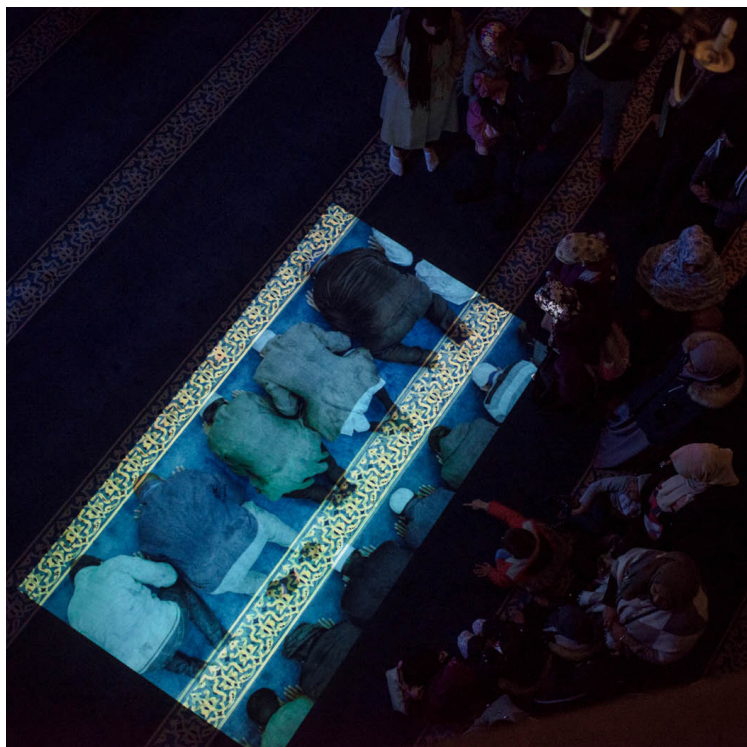
Spectacular, Amazing, beautiful
creative and nice

3. How did the artwork make you feel?

Well I don't know
but I did feel amazed











Assembly: site-specific artwork at Brick Lane Mosque

| | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|------|--------------------------|
| Boy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Girl | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Age | <u>9</u> | | |

1. Have you ever visited a mosque before?

Yes ☒ No ☐

2. Can you describe the artwork in five words?

~~Amazing~~ ^{amazing} fabulous intricate
Bijou fantastic

3. How did the artwork make you feel?

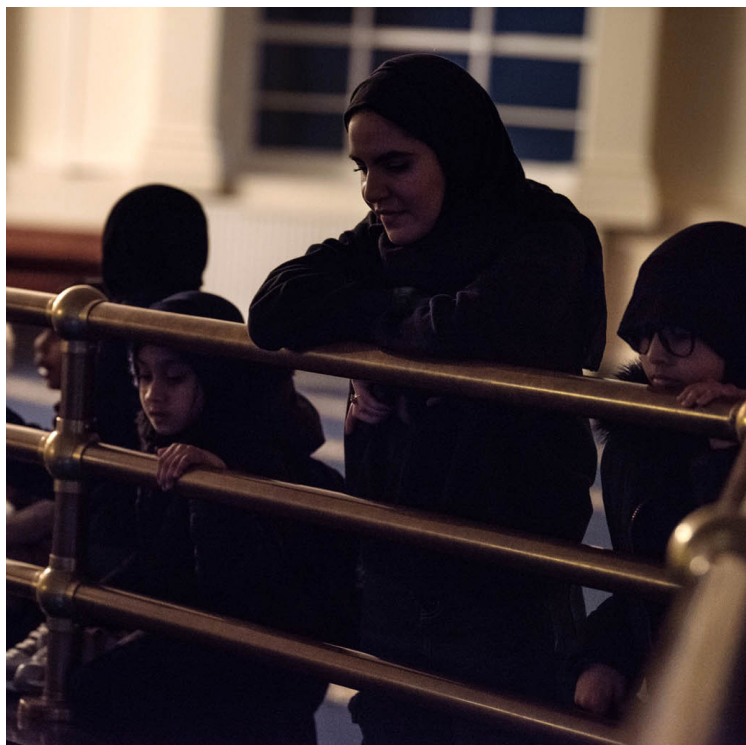
~~amazed~~ It made me feel amazed











Boy

☒

Girl

☐

Age

10

1. Have you ever visited a mosque before?

Yes

☒

No

☐

2. Can you describe the artwork in five words?

Artistic,

fantastic,

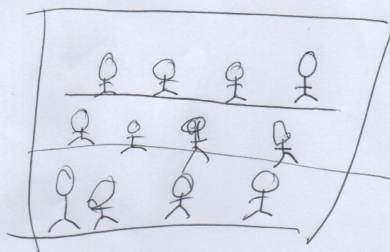
creative,
beautiful

marvelous

3. How did the artwork make you feel?

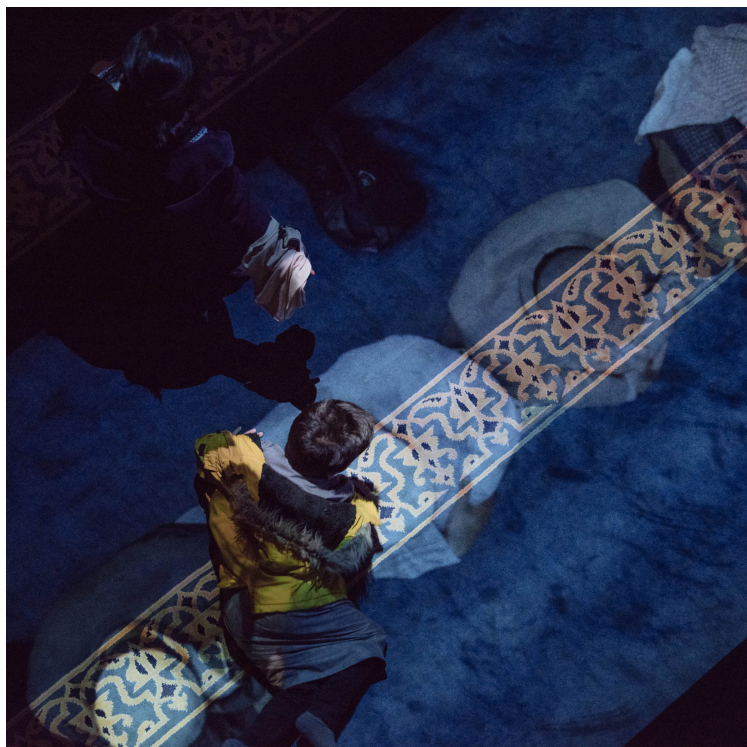
It made me
feel surprised
because I never
saw an artwork
that has people praying.

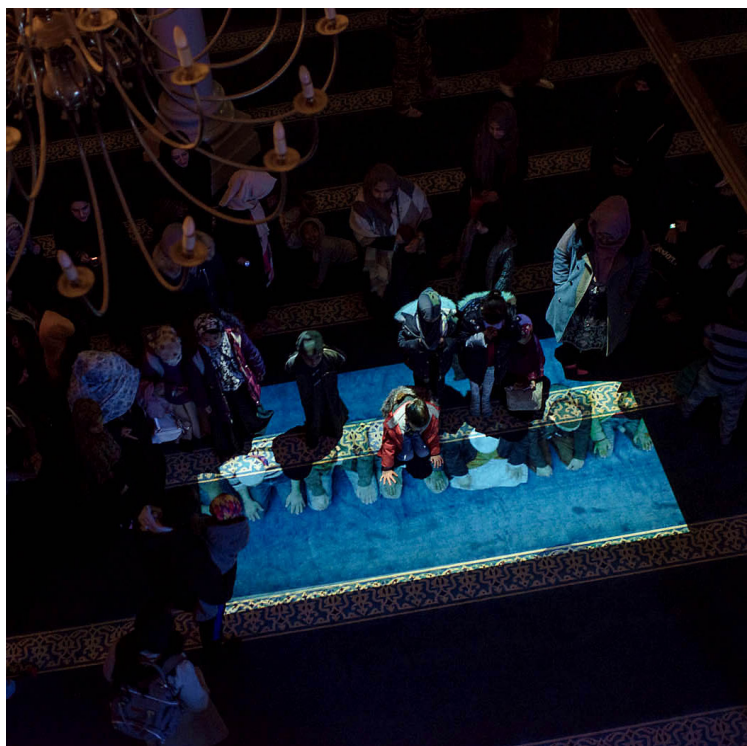
4. On this page please draw a memory from your visit to the mosque.











Assembly: site-specific artwork at Brick Lane Mosque

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|
| Boy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Girl | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Age <u>8</u> | | | |

1. Have you ever visited a mosque before?

Yes ☐

No ☒

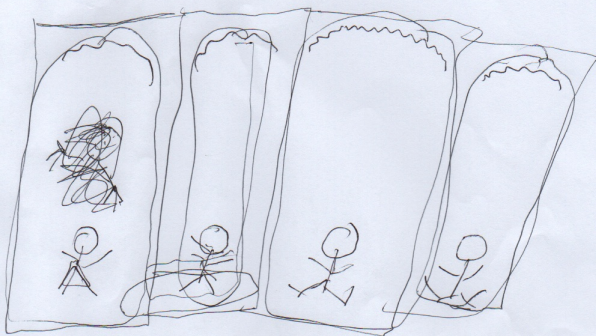
2. Can you describe the artwork in five words?

1. Magical
2. Beautiful
3. Special
4. Calming
5. Moving

3. How did the artwork make you feel?

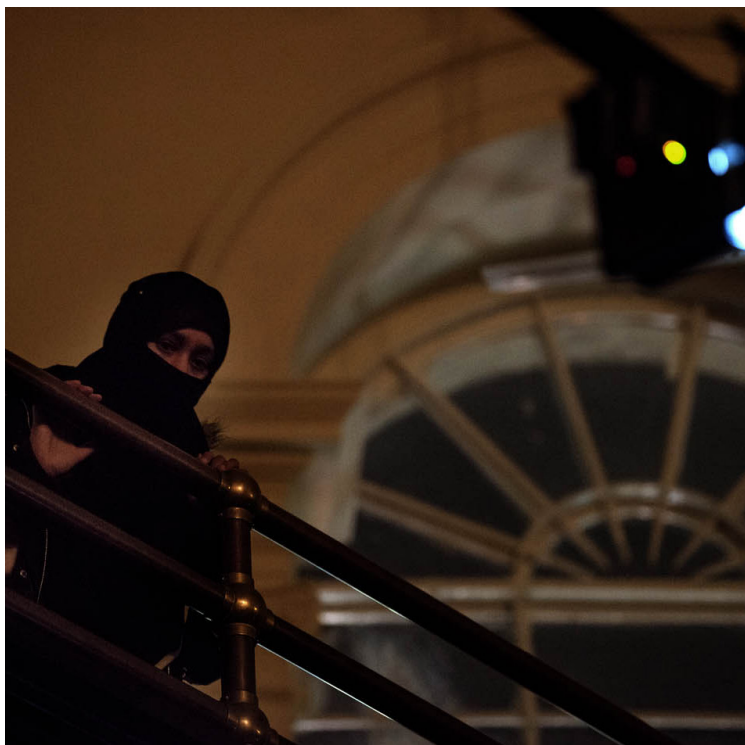
The artwork made me feel excited and small,
I didn't know what I should do.

4. On this page please draw a memory from your visit to the mosque.









I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to Imam Kamal Hussain and the Brick Lane Jamme Masjid congregation and community for their on-going support, insight and facilitation of the project.

ISBN 978-1-5272-3072-7